

UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN

JAN 25 1956

PERIODICAL
READING ROOM

The Shaw Bulletin

Published by the Shaw Society of America, Inc.

Contents

The Blanco Posnet Controversy	1
Bernard Shaw: Blanco Posnet Banned by the Censor	
James Joyce: Shaw's Battle with the Censor	
William Butler Yeats: The Religion of Blanco	
The New York Critics and <i>Saint Joan</i>	10
by Alice Griffin	
Hyperion and the Yahoos	16
by Eric J. Batson	
A Presentational <i>Saint Joan</i>	19
by William Honan	
Shaw at Hedgerow	22
by Grant Code	
Nearer to a Spiritual Positive	24
by Christopher Fry	

*Suppose the world were one of God's jokes,
would you work any the less to make it a
good joke instead of a bad one?*

—G.B.S.

• The Shaw Bulletin

Number Seven

January, 1955

Editor Dan H. Laurence

Editorial Board

Sara Arlen	Archibald Henderson
William D. Chase	Maxwell Steinhardt
Felix Grendon	

The Shaw Bulletin is available exclusively to members of The Shaw Society of America, Inc., and to libraries. A special subscription rate of \$3 per year is offered to libraries. Members may order extra copies of current numbers at fifty cents each. Back numbers (Nos. 2, 3, 5, and 6 only) are available at \$1 each.

The Shaw Bulletin is published three times annually, in January, May, and September. Copyright 1955 by the Shaw Society of America, Inc. All rights reserved. No material may be reprinted either wholly or in part without permission.



Address all communications concerning subscriptions, manuscript contributions, and other queries to Dan H. Laurence, Editor, *The Shaw Bulletin*, Hofstra College, Hempstead, N. Y. Members are urged to notify the editor promptly of change of address.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed, but will be returned only if return postage is provided. In matters of style, *The Shaw Bulletin* follows the practice recommended in the *MLA Style Sheet*.

The Blanco Posnet Controversy

The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet was first conceived in March of 1909, inspired, Shaw later reported to Count Tolstoy, by the figure of the old soldier in *Power of Darkness* (though it also bore marked resemblance to Shaw's earlier play, *The Devil's Disciple*). In the play Shaw was, he said, finding fault "with the teaching which tells men to be good without giving them any better reason for it than the opinion of men who are neither attractive to them, nor respectful to them, and who, being much older, are to a great extent not only incomprehensible to them, but ridiculous. Elder Daniels will never convert Blanco Posnet: on the contrary, he perverts him, because Blanco does not want to be like his brother; and I think the root reason why we do not do as our fathers advise us to do is that we none of us want to be like our fathers, the intention of the Universe being that we should be like God." (Henderson, *Bernard Shaw*, London, 1911, pp. 395-6) The mystical little work was completed by the end of March and submitted, as a matter of routine, to the Lord Chamberlain's office for censorship approval, preparatory to being produced for a projected benefit performance in aid of a children's charity at His Majesty's Theatre. Unexpectedly—and inconceivably—the "religious tract in dramatic form" was rejected by the censor as "irreligious."

Had this been an isolated example of narrowness and arbitrariness on the part of the censor, the ensuing controversy might not have been so spontaneous and heated. The fact was, however, that the incident climaxed a long series of battles between dramatists and the Lord Chamberlain's office, and the rejection of *Blanco*, followed almost immediately thereafter by a refusal to license Shaw's playlet, "Press Cuttings," set off an explosion which, in August, 1909, resulted in a full-scale examination of the censorship problem by a Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, before whom every major dramatic figure in the British Isles, from Granville-Barker to Henry James, gave testimony.

The major grievance, to Shaw, as stated in his testimony, was that the censor had "absolutely at his disposal my livelihood and my good name without any law to administer behind him. That, it appears to me,

¹For permission to publish previously unpublished materials and to reprint copyrighted materials, the editor wishes to thank Mr. Stanislaus Joyce, Mr. George Yeats, Mr. Ellsworth Mason, Mr. Herbert Cahoon, the Yale University Library, and the management of the Abbey Theatre. Especial thanks are offered to Dr. T. E. Hanley, who not only made available the correspondence between Lady Gregory, the Dublin Castle authorities, and Bernard Shaw, as well as the only known extant copy of Shaw's published broadside on the *Blanco Posnet* censorship, but also generously underwrote the editor's traveling expenses to Bradford, Pa., to examine these materials.

is a control past the very last pitch of despotism." Earlier, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* had been rejected by the censor (it was not licensed for public performance in England until 1926), and *Major Barbara* had barely avoided the axe. "It was 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' that frightened [the censor]," Shaw later reported to Hesketh Pearson. "He asked whether they were not the last words of Christ on the cross. Barker assured him that they were in the psalms. He then gave in." (Pearson, *Bernard Shaw*, London, 1942, p. 241) Now, outraged by this new patent insult to himself, Shaw immediately prepared a rejoinder. Issued on a single unfolded quarto leaf, it was presumably distributed to Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's audiences at His Majesty's Theatre, though no reference to the broadside has been noted in any existing Shavian biography or bibliography. The full statement reads as follows:

BLANCO POSNET BANNED BY THE CENSOR
Statement By Mr. Bernard Shaw

I have no information to add to that which is already public property. The decision whether a play is morally fit to be performed or not, rests with the King absolutely; and I am not in the King's confidence. To write a play too vile for public performance even at the very indulgent standard applied to our London theatres is as grave an offence as a man can commit, short of downright felony: in fact, it is much worse than most felonies. To announce it for production at a theatre of high reputation is almost as bad. I presume the King would not hold up Mr. Tree and myself before Europe and America as guilty of this disgraceful conduct unless he had the most entire confidence in his own judgment or that of his advisers. The injury—not to mention the insult—to us is very considerable; but the disgrace will depend on the extent to which the public shares the King's faith in this matter. It would be affectation for me to pretend to share it. I shall allow the play to be performed in America and throughout Europe. I shall publish it. I should not do that if I shared the King's opinion of it. I have far more at stake than anyone else concerned; for I should be ruined if I lost the confidence of the public in my honor and conscience as a playwright, as I have no following among vicious or thoughtless people. But I naturally regret that Mr. Tree, the first of our successful West-End managers to step into the gap left by the retirement of Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker from what may be called National Theatre work with his Afternoon Theatre, should find that he has only exposed himself to what is virtually a rebuke for misconduct from the very quarter in which he might have expected the most enlightened support. The effect on the future of the theatre will be seen later on. Young men are at this moment writing plays for the repertory theatres of Mr. Frohman and Mr. Herbert Trench. They cannot afford, as I accidentally can, to lose the price of months of arduous labor and be blacklisted by managers as dangerous. This reminder to them that there is safety in *The Merry Widow* and the utmost danger in plays of the kind I write, will inevitably act as a lesson to them which will seem gratifying and hopeful only to those who not only enjoy *The Merry Widow*—I enjoy it myself greatly for the matter of that—but who think that it presents a complete, satisfactory, and edifying view of human motive and destiny.

I repeat that I do not know why the play has been declared unfit to exist. It is a very simple and even crude melodrama, with absolutely no sexual interest whatever. It represents a little community of violent, cruel, sensual, ignorant, blasphemous, bloodthirsty backwoodsmen, whose conception of manliness is mere brute pugnacity, and whose favorite sport is lynching. Into this welter of crude newspaperized savagery there suddenly comes a force—not mentioned in *The Merry Widow*—to which they give the name of God, the slightest regard for which they make it a point of honor to despise as mere weakness of character. That force nevertheless, at the crisis which is the subject of the drama, makes them do its will and not their own in a manner very amazing to themselves, and, I should hope, not altogether unedifying to the spectators. I am given to understand that the introduction of this force into my play as a substitute for the simple cupidities and concupiscences of *The Merry Widow* is the feature that renders the play unfit for performance. It was precisely the feature which made the play worth writing to me. What is called the struggle of a man with God is the most dramatic of all conflicts: in fact, the only one that makes really good drama. But our royal rule is that conflict with God cannot be permitted on the stage. Except when the name of God is taken altogether in vain, by way of swearing, the Divine Antagonist must be spoken of, even by the most hardened and savage outlaws, with the decorum and devotional respect observed by our Bishops. Handel's *Messiah*, for instance, is unfit for performance in the theatre because the chorus bursts into fierce derision of divinity. They shoot out their lips and wag their heads, reviling, taunting, saying "Let Him deliver him if He delight in him." (I have noticed, by the way, that this chorus is very commonly sung in England as if it were a hymn.) Well, my hero had to shoot out his lip and wag his head. He went to his salvation as St. Paul did, kicking against the pricks, and not at all as Mr. Pecksniff went to his damnation. And that, I understand, is why the King will not allow him to be exhibited on the stage in England. He could have been seduced by the *Merry Widow* with impunity. So England will have its *Merry Widow*; and the other countries will have their *Blanco Posnet*. It is not for me to say which will have the best of that bargain in the long run.

Shaw's next move was to offer the play to William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory, directors of the Abbey Theatre, for possible production in Dublin. The reason for this was quite simple; due to legal technicality Dublin was the one place in all the British Isles where the censor's ruling did not apply. Influence, however, could be brought to bear, and no sooner had Yeats and Lady Gregory agreed to produce the play than the hand of authority was lifted against them. Prodded by the officialdom of London, the powers at Dublin Castle found a legal technicality for questioning the right of the Abbey to produce Shaw's play. On August 17, 1909, a letter from Dublin Castle was delivered to Lady Gregory:

Dear Lady Gregory,

I am directed by the Lord Lieutenant to state that His Excellency's attention has been called to an announcement in the public Press that a play entitled "*The Showing Up* [sic] of *Blanco Posnet*," is about to be performed in the Abbey Theatre.

This play was written for production in a London Theatre, but its performance was disallowed by the Authority which in England is charged with the Censorship of stage plays. The play does not deal with an Irish subject, and it is not an Irish play in any other sense than that its author was born in Ireland. It is now proposed to produce this play in the Abbey Theatre which was founded for the express purpose of encouraging dramatic art in Ireland and of fostering a dramatic school growing out of the life of the country.

The play in question does not seem well adapted to promote these laudable objects or to belong to the class of plays originally intended to be performed in the Abbey Theatre as described in the evidence on the hearing of the application for the Patent.

However this may be, the fact of the proposed performance having been brought to the notice of the Lord Lieutenant, His Excellency cannot evade the responsibility cast upon him of considering whether the play conforms in other respects to the conditions of the Patent.

His Excellency, after the most careful consideration, has arrived at the conclusion that in its original form the play is not in accordance either with the assurances given by those interested when the Patent was applied for, or with the conditions and restrictions contained in the Patent as granted by the Crown.

As you are the holder of the Patent in trust for the generous founder of the Theatre, His Excellency feels bound to call your attention, and also the attention of those with whom you are associated, to the terms of the Patent and to the serious consequences which the production of the play in its original form might entail.

I am to add that the Lord Lieutenant would deeply regret should it become necessary to take any action which might inflict loss upon the public-spirited lady who founded a home for the Irish National Theatre, or which might result in depriving the Society that has already done good work for Irish dramatic art of the means of prosecuting a worthy enterprise with which His Excellency is in entire sympathy, and which, if judiciously pursued, may do much to refine and elevate the literary taste of the community. I am

Yours most truly
J. B. Dougherty

A day later, Lord Aberdeen, the Lord Lieutenant, sent a personal communication in which he reiterated most of the comments embodied in the earlier letter. "It really comes to a question of the interpretation and application of an official document, under which the Abbey St. Theatre carries on business. I refer of course to the Patent. And in order to make the more sure of the ground and also as to whether I am called upon to intervene, I have obtained the opinion of the official legal adviser of the Irish Government: and this is entirely in support of the view and purpose already indicated to yourself and Mr. Yeats by Sir James Dougherty on my behalf . . . I write this," added Lord Aberdeen ominously, ". . . in order that you may have the earliest intimation of what is impending. . . ."

Lady Gregory's letter to Shaw immediately upon receipt of Aberdeen's communication made it clear that she and Yeats were prepared to draw up battle lines. "We do not intend to give in one inch . . . If he keeps to his threat, we mean to go to the newspaper offices in the evening, and have our statement in as a surprise for Aberdeen's breakfast." On the 19th Lady Gregory and Yeats visited Aberdeen to discuss the problem—and to apprise him of the fact that Shaw's play was "not in its original form as refused by the Censor," having been

revised for the printed version and modified still further for the stage version to be performed at the Abbey, though, as Shaw clearly stated in a letter to Lady Gregory, "without concessions of any kind to the attacks that have been made upon it" "There is nothing," he added, ". . . that might not have been written by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and . . . in point of consideration for the religious beliefs of the Irish people, the play compares very favourably indeed with the Coronation Oath." Shaw agreed to a few insignificant cuts, but neither he nor Lady Gregory would concede any more than this. And Aberdeen finally seemed satisfied. On Saturday, the 21st, however, the newspapers carried a story, presumably issued from Dublin Castle, to the effect that the Abbey Theatre would have to withdraw the play or be prepared to lose its patent. The following day the Abbey Theatre directors took up the challenge, issuing the following statement to the press:

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTORS

The statement communicated to certain of Saturday's papers makes the following explanation necessary:

During the last week we have been vehemently urged to withdraw Mr. Shaw's play, which had already been advertised and rehearsed, and have refused to do so. We would have listened with attention to any substantial argument; but we found, as we were referred from one well-meaning personage to another, that no one would say the play was hurtful to man, woman or child. Each said that someone else had thought so, or might think so. We were told that Mr. Redford [the London censor] had objected, that the Lord Chamberlain had objected, and that, if produced, it would certainly offend excited officials in London, and might offend officials in Dublin, or the law officers of the Crown, or the Lord Lieutenant, or Dublin society, or Archbishop Walsh, or the Church of Ireland, or "rowdies up for the Horse Show," or newspaper editors, or the King.

In these bewilderments and shadowy opinions there was nothing to change our conviction (which is also that of the leading weekly paper of the Lord Lieutenant's own party), that so far from containing offence for any sincere and honest mind, Mr. Shaw's play is a high and weighty argument upon the working of the Spirit of God in man's heart, or to show that it is not a befitting thing for us to set upon our stage the work of an Irishman, who is also the most famous of living dramatists, after that work had been silenced in London by what we believe an unjust decision.

One thing, however, is plain enough, an issue that swallows up all else, and makes the merit of Mr. Shaw's play a secondary thing. If our patent is in danger, it is because the decisions of the English Censor are being brought into Ireland, and because the Lord Lieutenant is about to revive, on what we consider a frivolous pretext, a right not exercised for 150 years, to forbid, at the Lord Chamberlain's pleasure, any play produced in any Dublin theatre, all these theatres holding their patents from him.

We are not concerned with the question of the English censorship,

now being fought out in London, but we are very certain that the conditions of the two countries are different, and that we must not, by accepting the English Censor's ruling, give away anything of the liberty of the Irish theatre of the future. Neither can we accept, without protest, the revival of the Lord Lieutenant's claim at the bidding of the Censor or otherwise. The Lord Lieutenant is definitely a political personage holding office from the party in power, and what would sooner or later grow into a political censorship cannot be lightly accepted.

W. B. YEATS, *Managing Director.*

A. GREGORY, *Director and Patentee.*

On Wednesday, August 25, 1909, the Abbey Theatre premiered Shaw's play, featuring Fred O'Donovan as Blanco, Sara Allgood as Feemy, Arthur Sinclair as Elder Daniels, and J.M. Kerrigan as Strapper. There was no further official demur; the united attack of the Dublin press, combining with the obduracy of Yeats and Lady Gregory, had apparently shocked the enemy into stunned silence. The *London Times* reported next morning that the audience had accepted the play in "a very friendly manner, laughing heartily at its humours, passing over its dangerous passages with attentive silence, calling loudly but in vain for the author at the close." Reviews in the *Irish Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, among other papers, were equally favorable. The sensation and excitement which had preceded the opening were quickly dispelled, attention being re-focused on "Horse Show week" in Dublin. Shaw's battle with the censors had not yet come to an end, but in Dublin he had won the first round.

To Lady Gregory, the patent holder, the battle had been primarily of a "political" nature; to Yeats, however, the battle was one, rather, of freedom of artistic expression. Shaw's play, to Yeats, was a reverent expression of spiritual values, and he was moved to offer his personal evaluation of the significance of the play. Accordingly, he published in a special number of *The Arrow*, the Abbey's house organ, issued on August 25th and devoted entirely to the Blanco Posnet controversy, the following exegesis:

THE RELIGION OF BLANCO POSNET

The meaning of Mr. Shaw's play, as I understand it, is that natural man, driven on by passion and vain glory, attempts to live as his fancy bids him but is awakened to the knowledge of God by finding himself stopped, perhaps suddenly, by something within himself. This something, which is God's care for man, does not temper the wind to the shorn lamb, as a false and sentimental piety would have it, but is a terrible love that awakens the soul amidst catastrophes and trains it by conquest and labour.

The essential incidents of the play are Blanco's giving up the horse, the harlot's refusal to name the thief, and the child's death of the croup. Without the last of these Mr. Shaw's special meaning would be lost, for he wants us to understand that God's love will not do the work of the Doctor, or any work that man can do, for it acts by

awakening the intellect and the soul whether in some man of science or philosopher or in violent Posnet.

W. B. Y.

Yeats was not, however, the only Dublin literary giant to examine Shaw's play. In the audience at its Abbey premiere was a second significant figure, James Joyce, attending the performance as literary critic for *Il Piccolo della Sera*, an Italian-language newspaper published in Trieste. Joyce's review, embodying, interestingly, the only unfavorable criticism of the play noted in the contemporary press, and including a summation of the circumstances which had threatened the premiere, appeared in *Il Piccolo* on Sunday, September 5, 1909, where it has lain buried ever since. It is here published in an English translation for the first time.

SHAW'S BATTLE WITH THE CENSOR

Dublin, 31 August [1909].

There is one gay week every year in the Dublin calendar, the last week of August, in which the famous Horse Show draws to the Irish capital a vari-colored crowd, of many languages, from its sister island, from the continent, and even from far-off Japan. For a few days the tired and cynical city is dressed like a newly-wed bride. Its gloomy streets swarm with a feverish life, and an unaccustomed uproar breaks its senile slumber.

This year, however, an artistic event has almost eclipsed the importance of the Show, and all over town they are talking about the clash between Bernard Shaw and the Viceroy. As is well known, Shaw's latest play, "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet," was branded with the mark of infamy by the Lord Chamberlain of England, who banned its performance in the United Kingdom. The censor's decision probably did not come as much of a surprise to Shaw, because the same censor did the same thing to two other theatrical works of Shaw's, "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and the very recent "Press Cuttings"; and Shaw probably considers himself honored by the arbitrary proclamation which has condemned his comedies, together with Ibsen's "Ghosts," Tolstoy's "The Power of Darkness," and Wilde's "Salome."

However, he did not give up, and he found a way to elude the frightened vigilance of the censor. By a strange chance, the city of Dublin is the only place in all the British territory in which the censor has no power; in fact, the old law contains these words: "except the city of Dublin." Shaw, then, offered his play to the company of the Irish National Theatre, which accepted it and announced its performance just as though nothing were out of the ordinary. It was apparent that the censor was rendered powerless. Then the Viceroy of Ireland intervened to uphold the prestige of authority. There was a lively exchange of letters between the representative of the King and the writer of comedy,² severe and threatening on the one side, insolent

²A translation by Lindley W. Hubbell of Joyce's review was sent, in manuscript, to Shaw by Herbert Cahoon in 1949. Shaw's only comment appended to the manuscript (now in the Yale University Library), when he returned it, was a terse footnote concerning Joyce's reference to "a lively exchange of letters . . ." (which Shaw had underlined and emphasized

and scoffing on the other, while Dubliners, who care nothing for art but love an argument passionately, rubbed their hands with joy. Shaw held fast, insisting on his rights, and the little theatre hall was so filled at the first performance that it was literally sold out more than seven times over.

A heavy crowd thronged about the Abbey Theatre that evening, and a cordon of giant guards maintained order; but it was evident at once that no hostile demonstration would be made by the select public who jammed every nook of the little avant garde theatre. In fact, the report of the evening performance mentioned not even the lightest murmur of protest; and at the curtain fall, a thunderous applause summoned the actors for repeated curtain calls.

Shaw's comedy, which he describes as a sermon in crude melodrama, is, as you know, in a single act. The action unfolds in a wild and woolly city of the Far West, the protagonist is a horse thief, and the play limits itself to his trial. He has stolen a horse which he thought belonged to his brother, to repay himself for a sum taken from him unjustly. But while he is fleeing from the city, he meets a woman with a sick baby. She wants to get back to town in order to save the life of her child, and, moved by her appeal, he gives her the horse. Then he is captured and taken to the city to be tried. The trial is violent and arbitrary. The sheriff acts as prosecutor, shouting at the accused, banging the table, and threatening witnesses with revolver in hand. Posnet, the thief, sets forth some primitive theology. The moment of sentimental weakness in which he yielded to the prayers of a poor mother has been the crisis of his life. The finger of God has touched his brain. He no longer has the strength to live the cruel, animal life he had led before this encounter. He breaks out into long, disjointed speeches (and it is here that the pious English censor covered his ears), which are theological insofar as their subject is God, but not very churchly in diction. In the sincerity of his convictions, Posnet resorts to the language of the mining camp; and, among other reflections, when he is trying to say that God works secretly in the hearts of men, to the language of horse thieves.

The play ends happily. The baby which Posnet tried to save dies, and the mother is apprehended. She tells her story to the court and Posnet is acquitted. Nothing more flimsy can be imagined, and the playgoer asks himself in wonder why on earth the play was interdicted by the censor.

Shaw is right; it is a sermon. Shaw is a born preacher. His lively and talkative spirit cannot stand to be subjected to the noble and bare style appropriate to modern playwriting. Indulging himself in wandering prefaces and extravagant rules of drama, he creates for himself a dramatic form which is much like a dialogue novel. He has a sense of situation, rather than of drama logically and ethically led to a conclusion. In this case he has dug up the central incident of his "Devil's Disciple"

by a finger-pointing hand drawn in the left margin and an asterisk in the right). "There was no exchange of letters between myself and Dublin Castle," he noted. "The campaign was conducted by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats. I did not interfere. G. Bernard Shaw 21 July 1949."

and transformed it into a sermon. The transformation is too abrupt to be convincing as a sermon, and the art is too poor to make it convincing as drama.

Perhaps this play reflects a crisis in the mind of its writer. Earlier, at the end of "John Bull's Other Island," the crisis was set forth. Shaw, as well as his latest protagonist, has had a profane and unruly past. Fabianism, vegetarianism, prohibitionism, music, painting, drama—all the progressive movements in art and politics—have had him as champion. And now, perhaps, some divine finger has touched his brain, and he, in the guise of Blanco Posnet, is shown up.

James Joyce

(Translated by Ellsworth Mason)



Virginia Woolf on Shaw

Friday, April 28th [1933]: We got out of the car last night and began walking down to the Serpentine . . . there was Shaw, dwindled shanks, white beard; striding along. We talked by a railing for 15 minutes. He stood with his arms folded, very upright, leaning back: teeth gold tipped. Just come from the dentist and "lured" out for a walk by the weather. Very friendly. That is his art, to make one think he likes one. A great spurt of ideas. "You forget that an aeroplane is like a car—it bumps— We went over the great wall—saw a little dim object in the distance. Of course the tropics are the place. The people are the original human beings. We are smudged copies. I caught the Chinese looking at us with horror—that we should be human beings! Of course the tour cost thousands: yet to see us you'd think we hadn't the price of the fare to Hampton Court. Lots of old spinsters had saved up for years to come. Oh but my publicity! It's terrifying. An hour's bombardment at every port. I made the mistake of accepting [a school] invitation. I found myself on a platform with the whole university round me. They began shouting We want Bernard Shaw. So I told them that every man at 21 must be a revolutionary. After that of course the police imprisoned them by dozens. I want to write an article for the *Herald* pointing out what Dickens said years ago about the folly of Parliament. Oh I could only stand the voyage by writing. I've written 3 or 4 books. I like to give the public full weight. Books should be sold by the pound. What a nice little dog. But aren't I keeping you and making you cold?" (touching my arm). Two men stopped along the path to look. Off he strode again on his dwindled legs. I said Shaw likes us. L[eonard Woolf] thinks he likes nobody. What will they say of Shaw in 50 years? He is 76 he said: too old for the tropics.

— Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1954). By permission.

The New York Critics and "Saint Joan"

by Alice Griffin¹

When Shaw's *Saint Joan* had its world premiere in New York in December of 1923, although it was a popular success, its reception by the New York critics did not indicate that within three decades it would come to be recognized as one of the world's dramatic masterpieces. As a matter of fact, it was not even elected by Burns Mantle as one of the "ten best" plays of the 1923-4 season for inclusion in his annual volume.

There having been two Broadway revivals since that time, and a third, starring Jean Arthur, having toured several Eastern cities last fall, it might be interesting to trace the history of *Saint Joan* on our professional stage to determine how a great play comes to be acknowledged as such by those whose reactions have come to determine the fate of a production—the Broadway critics. And in passing, through their words and Shaw's own, some indication of the type of production given the play may also be gained. Like those of many a lesser work, the first reviews of *Saint Joan* were "mixed"; in the Katharine Cornell revival in 1936, it was beginning to be cautiously accepted as an outstanding work, and by 1951, when Uta Hagen was starred, the play was generally acknowledged as a modern masterpiece, with the reviewers highly critical because the production did not equal the play in excellence.

The presentation by the Theatre Guild in 1923 was preceded by the usual production problems posed by every play, even—and perhaps especially—by the great ones. As recounted by Lawrence Langner, co-director of the Guild, in his book *The Magic Curtain* (New York, 1951, pp. 174-183), the first and continuing difficulty was with the length of the script. To Langner's first plea Shaw replied with his now-famous cable: "Begin at eight or run later trains. . . ." Another problem was that the Guild cast started rehearsing with the first script Shaw had sent to Langner; then the Guild learned that the author was sending a revised version. When they protested, Shaw replied: "When I heard that you were actually rehearsing from a copy which you knew to be an unrevised first proof I tore my hair. I should not have trusted you with it . . . and if the stoppage of the rehearsals (not that I have any hope that you really stopped them) cost you £400, which is great nonsense, my only regret is that it did not cost you £4,000, an

¹Dr. Griffin is a member of the English Department at Hunter College, and author of *Living Theatre and Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage*. As associate editor of *Theatre Arts Magazine* she has written numerous articles on the Broadway scene.

all-too-slender penalty for such criminal recklessness. . . ."

Finally the play opened, on December 28th at the Garrick Theatre, and had the power of the critics been as great then as it is today, one wonders whether *Saint Joan* would have made the grade. As it was, it was so successful that it had to be moved to a larger theatre to take care of capacity crowds. But Percy Hammond of the *Tribune* was not much impressed. "Mr. Shaw's chronicle of Joan of Arc makes the life and works of that sainted maiden duller though more probable than legends have taught us to believe," he said, calling the work "just another example of Mr. Shaw's gift for interminable rag-chewing."

Although Alexander Woollcott in the *Herald* admitted that it was "a play that has greatness in it," he also complained that "certain scenes grow groggy for want of a blue pencil . . . others falter and go raucously astray. . . ." However, he also called it "beautiful, engrossing, and at times exalting," while Frank Lea Short in the *Christian Science Monitor* found it "very near to being [Shaw's] best work." Said Short, "Shaw's 'Joan' bids fair to be the Joan of the theatre of our time. It may even live far into the future." He was, however, critical of what he called its "local gags." Writing in *Theatre Arts Monthly* for March, 1924, Kenneth Macgowan felt that Shaw had passed his prime: "Personally I am thoroughly annoyed by the play. It isn't half Shavian enough. Age seems to be withering the scorn of this iconoclast, tarnishing the perverse brilliance of his mind, and taming his wit." The talk was not brilliant, Mr. Macgowan asserted, and "the inspiration and divinity of Shaw have departed."

As contrasted with the analyses of Katharine Cornell's portrayal in 1936, not too much space was devoted to Winifred Lenihan, who enacted Joan. Macgowan commented that "Winifred Lenihan plays Joan with not very great spiritual vision, but within her limits she is simple, earnest, and vigorous; her faults are never positive." Percy Hammond saw Miss Lenihan's interpretation as "a smug and self-satisfied flapper, eager for excitement."

From the very first production, the epilogue, here as abroad, was greeted with much adverse comment. Woollcott felt that Shaw himself would probably cut some of the scenes "when he sees the play outrun itself in London, especially that final scene which says the same thing several times." And Hammond did not even stay for the epilogue: "I left, as many others did, before the dreamy epilogue, and so I can report only through hearsay that it, too, was tiresome."

Yet from the first the play aroused much thought and discussion on the part of critics and others. Writing of the new play, Walter Prichard Eaton pointed out that "Shaw is not only one of the keenest minds in the world today; he is one of the most religious of men . . . *Saint Joan* is the work of a religious soul." Luigi Pirandello, asked to write his impressions of the play for the *New York Times*, stated that he puzzled at the silence of the audience attending the play: "Had an act as powerful as the fourth act of *Saint Joan* been produced on any one of the numerous Italian stages," he asserted, "all the people present would have jumped to their feet, even before the curtain fell, to start a frenzied applause." In New York audiences, he noticed, "a

certain sense of modesty seemed to be uppermost. A certain sense of shame at being deeply moved, a need of hiding emotion and getting rid of it as soon as possible."

Shaw was not too concerned with the American reviews, but he seemed much impressed that Pirandello had written about *Joan*. Writing to Lawrence Langner about the reviews and about publicity for the play, he said: "I am not at all anxious about *Joan*; but I am somewhat concerned about you. You could hardly have been rattled by Heywood Brown and Alan a Dale *et hoc genus omne* if you had not been rattled already . . . The great press feature of the production was the notice by Pirandello, which you never even mentioned."

When he received photographs of the production, Shaw commented in detail about the casting, the costumes, the sets, and the direction:

. . . both Baudricourt and Poulengy should be in half armor and be obviously soldiers and not merchants. This is important, as it strikes the note of France in war time. As it is, Poulengy's coat should not be belted . . . In the second act . . . at the end of the act [*Joan*] should be in front of all the rest, in command of the stage in the good old fashioned way from the point of view of the audience, and not beautifully composed in the middle of the picture with all the other people turning their backs to the spectators. Why don't you carry out my directions and get my effects instead of working for pictorial effects . . . The Bishop looks about right for the Inquisitor and the Inquisitor for the Bishop . . . The altar and candles in the middle of the cathedral scene are feebly stagy, and do not give the effect of a corner of a gigantic cathedral as my notion of one big pillar would. And it leads to that upstage effect, with a very feminine operatic-looking *Joan* in the centre, which I wanted to avoid. The drag towards the conventional is very evident; and is the last word in operatic artificiality . . . but still, it is all very pretty in the American way, and might have been worse.

Since the London productions are not within the scope of this article, it can be noted only in passing that the play there equalled its American success. Desmond MacCarthy, in the *New Statesman and Nation* for April, 1924, called it ". . . I think, the greatest of Shaw's plays." In discussing the theme of the play, he wrote: "As the epilogue, to which several dramatic critics have objected, shows, the essence of the theme is the struggle of religious inspiration against established religions, against the patriot, the statesman, and the indifferent. . . ." Of Sybil Thorndike's *Maid* he stated: "Her distress, her alertness, her courage, she does drive home, but whether the fault lies in the part itself or in the interpretation, 'the angelic side' of the *Maid* is obscured."

Concerning the London production Shaw wrote to Langner that "the Play has repeated its American success here: it is going like mad; and everyone, to my disgust, assures me it is the best play I have ever written. Sybil Thorndike's acting and Charles Rickett's stage pictures and costumes have carried everything before them. I am convinced that our production knocks the American one into a cocked hat. . . ."

By the time *Saint Joan* was revived on Broadway, in March of 1936, with Katharine Cornell starring, and directed by Guthrie McClintic, even Percy Hammond had revised his opinion of the play and

certainly of the epilogue. Although he found the play this time "a bit loquacious," he said of the final scene: "When in the epilogue [Joan] vanished in a happy ending tableau . . . I said to myself, here is the Theatre in one of its most consecrated moments." And he had high praise, as did all the critics, for Miss Cornell's Joan, played, he said, "with all the magic and vigor known to the stage and to one of its ablest apostles."

At this production a Shavian comment on the epilogue was printed in the program, as follows: "Without the epilogue the play would be only a sensational tale of a girl who was burnt, leaving the spectators plunged in horror, despairing of humanity. The true tale of *Saint Joan* is a tale with a glorious ending; and any play that did not make this clear would be an insult to her memory." Shaw's attitude about the epilogue in the printed version of the play is the same, but somewhat differently expressed, it may be recalled: "It was necessary by hook or crook to shew the canonized Joan as well as the incinerated one; for many a woman has got herself burnt by carelessly whisking a muslin skirt into the drawing room fireplace, but getting canonized is a different matter, and a more important one."

Brooks Atkinson, writing of the Cornell production in the *New York Times*, declared that "a generous share of the modern theatre's grandeur is now on display." He was critical of some of the scenes as being "no more than competent" and of the "manner and verbosity of the epilogue" which "snatch a fine play back into the theatre tedium." "But," he concluded, "if *Saint Joan* offered nothing except the solemn trial scene and the compassionate wisdom of the inquisitor's speech, it would still rank with the best in the modern theatre."

As contrasted to 1923, a greater percentage of the reviewers were praiseful, but not all. John Anderson, writing in the *Evening Journal*, felt that, despite the program explanation, "it needs a better epilogue," while Richard Lockridge of the *New York Sun* was ecstatic about Miss Cornell but more reserved about the play: "Except when she is on stage, it is a trifle wan and wordy, and rather too much given to lengthy speeches, not all of which are in Shaw's best vein." He felt that, as a production, the first one had been better, "more of a piece, and served better to disguise the fact that the author's reflections are not invariably profound." Burns Mantle of the *News* agreed that Miss Cornell was better than the play, for whenever she was in command, he said, the scene was an inspired one, but whenever "Mr. Shaw took it over . . . it went temporarily a little sluggish." His opinion about the epilogue was that it "was attractively realized . . . and seemed less a foolish appendage than it has before." Robert Garland, in the *New York World-Telegram*, felt that "such verbiage as this self-styled 'chronicle play' quite obviously possesses is to be blamed directly on the playwright," and Arthur Hornblow of *Theatre Magazine* also protested at the "superabundance of Shavian talk," and was critical too of the familiarity with which Joan addressed the Dauphin, "taking unwarranted liberties with history." But he, like almost all of the others, agreed that this was Shaw's greatest play.

Gilbert W. Gabriel, in the *New York American*, expressed the effect of the passage of time on *Joan* in this manner: "Thirteen years have

not caused the best play Bernard Shaw ever wrote to dwindle at all, to blanch or turn dim, dull or puny. These same years have only confirmed his masterpiece." And John Mason Brown, in the *New York Evening Post*, reflected that "of all Shaw's plays *Saint Joan* seems to have upon it the most enduring marks of greatness." Brown found it "a play that in spite of its . . . length is a masterpiece that has moral grandeur to it, and above which hovers a light that is similar to the one which Joan sees dancing above Robert de Baudricourt's head."

Edith Isaacs, writing in *Theatre Arts Monthly* for May, 1936, reflected the general critical praise for Katharine Cornell's interpretation:

The qualities that mark Katharine Cornell's conception of the part of Saint Joan are all in Shaw's portrait: the joyous, simple faith in the voices and her humble dedication to their service; her blatant pride before men, the vanity that makes her love her youth's clothes and her uniform, the boyishness that demands an equal association with soldiers and their commanders. Out of these elements Katharine Cornell builds up her Joan from the inspired village girl . . . through the leadership of the King's forces and the hour of triumph, to the tragic final day of trial as a sorcerer and heretic. Through the scenes of the trial . . . she weaves all these elements of character like counterpoint against the fears, the bitterness and revenge, the narrowness of her opponents, lifting the scene up and up so that when she is finally led forth to the burning in the public square you are there with her, and at the same time she is still there with you in the hall of the castle, the scene of the trial, where Joan remains alive in spirit to this day.

By the time of the 1951 revival, in October of that year, presented by the Theatre Guild, directed by Margaret Webster, and with Uta Hagen in the lead, the play's status was assured, as far as the critics were concerned, with only one dissenter. As is always true of the revival of a classic, the major portion of each review was devoted to comments on the production, just the reverse of the 1923 reviews. While the play was acknowledged to be a masterpiece, there was a majority of unfavorable opinion concerning the production. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* was the most kindly disposed toward the production, stating: "The play is inspired. Neither Miss Hagen nor her associates let it down." But Bert McCord, in the *Herald-Tribune*, after asserting that "it is great theatre and should be witnessed by all who are interested in the theatre and believe that it can be great," went on to assert that the production did not realize the effort of the playwright, and that Miss Hagen's Joan was only "workmanlike." John Chapman of the *Daily News* felt that Miss Hagen's performance was "intelligent" but did not "convey the passion and zeal of a true saint." And Chapman believed the epilogue to be "tiresomely overwritten."

Robert Garland, as Percy Hammond had before him, found that the play impressed him more than it had on its previous trip to Broadway. Writing in the *Journal-American*, Garland stated: "Now, more than before, it is evident that the playwright wrote better than we know," but he did not like Miss Hagen's performance. The dissenter regarding the play was Robert Coleman of the *Daily Mirror*. Whereas Brooks Atkinson had said that the play "makes the theatre some-

thing worth venerating again," Coleman could see in it only "run-of-the-mill, pedestrian Shaw." He complained that "over the years we were under the impression that this was by all odds the best of the modern master's scripts. But now we aren't so sure."

Possibly Richard Watts Jr. of the *New York Post* best summed up one of the conclusions of this consideration of the reception of *Saint Joan* on Broadway. It is a point which can be stated very simply: a great play needs a great production to realize itself fully. After calling *Saint Joan* "a noble and magnificent play, the most distinguished dramatic work of its eminent author, and one of the greatest achievements of modern writing for the theatre," Watts stated that this production was "curiously lacking in distinction." "Unless it is superbly done, it can seem incredibly wordy," he said. "It merely happens that, in addition to its perversities, it possesses a true magnificence of thought, emotion, and creative imagination. It requires unusual excellence in a large number of parts to bring out its very genuine greatness." This was the same play that had premiered in 1923, and which had probably been given the same quality of production. But in twenty-eight years, *Saint Joan* had become a world masterpiece.



Shaw Has Been Here Before

The current hassle involving America, Britain, and France, concerning the re-arming of Western Germany, has led inevitably to the question: What would G.B.S. have said about this? Not being adept at communicating with Valhalla, we cannot provide the desired shade's-eye-view. To the editor's desk, however, has come a letter written by Shaw in the summer of 1918, turning down an invitation to lecture at a Fabian Summer School session in the United States. Shaw's stoical acceptance of America's dominance over Britain and the other allies of World War I clearly foreshadows the shape of things to come:

"I shall certainly not cross the herring pond just now. I have sat at England's bedside during her delirium; and I am not disposed to repeat that experience at America's.

"But the situation is very interesting, as far as any situation produced by violence can be. We are in for a dictated peace if a military decision can be obtained. If the Central Empires win, the peace will be dictated from Berlin. If the Allies win, the peace will be dictated from Washington. If you meet President Wilson, there is only one question worth putting to him; and he won't answer it. That question is 'What will your terms be?' His speech at Lincoln's tomb on the 4th July last did not mention the British Empire specifically as one of the institutions he was out to republicanize; but the implication was unmistakeable; and the imagination foresees the courts of St. James's and Potsdam falling into one another's arms at the Peace Conference with a cry of 'Save us from Wilson.'"

Hyperion and the Yahoos

by Eric J. Batson¹

The news that there were more than thirty summer productions of Shaw in the U. S. last year has sadly to be countered by the fact that in England we have had but one Shaw revival of late—though that a notable one of *Saint Joan* at London's "pocket national theatre," the Arts. Notable, that is, chiefly for so effective a production (by one of London's most experienced producers, John Fernald) on so small a stage, and for the radiant Irish Joan of Siobhan McKenna. Nevertheless, the jinx that gets hold of most English dramatic critics when they come to write of Shaw has been as hard at work as ever. In the *Observer*, a stripling critic, Mr. Kenneth Tynan (an ex-actor), finds the play a "charmless masterpiece . . . the first of his plays into which Shaw's senility creeps. The jokes misfire; the debates languish; and Shaw's passion for penal reform obtrudes to the detriment of the end." And in the *Sunday Times* the veteran and usually intelligent Mr. Harold Hobson, though he finds this "the best production of this good, but less than great, play that I have seen," has to confess "the unpalatable truth" that "a man without religion cannot write a really religious play." (Both these critics, incidentally, praise the only really bad performance in the production—that of the Inquisitor by a usually good actor, on this occasion woefully miscast.) The dramatic critic of the *Times Educational Supplement* has to bring in "Mr. Eliot's painfully just remark about Shaw's being 'poetically less than immature,'" and in praising Miss McKenna's interpretation thinks "it may be the very excellence of the performance which shows up the incompleteness of the conception . . . A less brilliant attempt to embody the humanity of Joan might have matched the lines more neatly and so worked the confidence trick with greater effect." He adds, however (all unconscious that he is being so): "But it would be absurd to blame Miss McKenna for being too good. . . ."

One can only turn to a far greater critic, the late Desmond MacCarthy, who in his *Shaw* (London, 1951) found *Saint Joan* "one of the very few fine religious plays in existence," and who writes: "Only a languid mind could fail to find in it intellectual excitement, only a very carefully protected sensibility could escape being touched and disturbed," though "to be touched and disturbed by it in any appreciable degree the spectator, some time or other, must have experienced religious emotions himself."

¹Mr. Batson, Hon. General Secretary of the Shaw Society (London) and, for many years, editor of *The Shavian*, is one of England's most acute critics and brilliant young wits. He is also, for the record, a lecturer, actor, and librarian of the City Literary Institute, London.

Then, following the mismanagement and ill-success of the Shaw Memorial Appeal (summed up so justly by Dr. Archibald Henderson in the *Shaw Bulletin*, No. 4: "The Decline and Fall-Off of the Shavian Empire?"), there has been the paltry treatment—by the National Trust on behalf of the British nation—of what a Sunday newspaper recently described as "A National Headache: Heartbreak House," Shaw's Corner at Ayot Saint Lawrence. The house has now been rented to an as yet unidentified American collector of Shaviana (so it is said), and is at present closed for re-arrangement. Only one small room (the study) and the grounds will be open on one day a week in future, and most journalists seek to give the impression that even this will hardly be justified, though when a small party from the Shaw Society (London) made one of its periodical visits there last August, we found the house as crowded as it usually seems to be on weekends. A great number of two-shillingises (about 30 cents) must have been taken from visitors during the hour or so we were there. And there is a two mile walk from the nearest bus-route! Yet little attempt has ever been made to attract visitors to Ayot (one of the prettiest villages in England) or, apart from a leaflet published by the Shaw Society, to explain clearly how to get there. Americans have told me that, before getting in touch with us, they have found it practically impossible to locate the place. It is not to be supposed that the National Trust, in this way, could ever have expected to "profit" out of so small or remote a house—let alone to "make even." I cannot help thinking that a really serious journalistic enquiry into the present handling of Shavian "interests"—including that of Shaw's Last Will and Testament—would be most revealing. Some people may not like the way Shaw tried to dispose of his *small* fortune, but it was his and he left it in what he considered to be the public interest. But what is happening to it? The Public Trustee, his legal executor, can't or won't say—he doesn't always answer letters of enquiry from us.

Meanwhile, the British Press does all it can to make Shaw seem unpopular (without ever mentioning such facts as the continued best-selling figures of the constantly reprinted Shaw volumes in the most excellent English Penguin edition). Even *Punch* (with which the English must console themselves for lack of a *New Yorker*) printed last April a new low in cheap and dismally "funny" articles, "Shaw's Corner—Any Offers?" by a Mr. G. W. Stonier, scoffing at Shaw's bad taste in domestic decoration—as if genius could be judged by its wallpaper—and concluding: "Well, we hoped they would find their tenant, the last whole-hearted Shavian, who would shoulder uncomplacabilities and bestow reverence and love where there had been none."

All in all, the yelp of the "envious detractor" still continues to follow Shaw "like an obscene echo" —maybe even a little louder now there is no fear of his answering back. In the *Sunday Express*, a Mr. John Gordon (its editor, I believe), giving a fatherly warning to one of the more vulgar and self-advertising of England's popular broadcasters, set before him the awful example of GBS, who "made himself rich and famous preaching democracy. But out of the public eye he practised it so poorly that the servants staffing Whitehall Court detested him. One day a liftman wished him a polite 'Good Morning' as he

entered the lift. Shaw did not reply till the lift reached its destination. Then as he stalked out he said brusquely: "The staff should not speak to residents unless they are spoken to first." (Mr. Gordon, suffering seriously from Shaw-blindness, would do well to examine the conversation between Tanner (Shaw) and Henry Straker in *Man and Superman*.) In a much milder way, the critics of the highly-esteemed and rather grandmotherly provincial newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian*, have a snooty, condescending habit where Shaw is concerned. In *Getting Married* recently, no one even "slams a door to signify anything," and *Arms and the Man* has been described in its pages as "a period farce of high merit." Which reminds me that the September 1953 issue of that very Shavian-minded American periodical, *Theatre Arts*, reprinted *Misalliance* in its entirety as its play of the month, and that a photo of Mr. Tarleton in appropriate period setting was unfortunately marred by his reading an obviously up-to-date copy of the *Manchester Guardian*—the producer having, no doubt, wished to secure a period paper of high merit!

But for the time being the palm for yelping "obscenity" must surely go to the obscure writer of a *Notes on Chosen English Texts* series, presumably intended for schools, published in London by Messrs James Brodie Ltd., and including Notes on *Saint Joan* and on *Caesar and Cleopatra* by Norman T. Carrington, M.A., F.R.G.S. With a grave humorlessness and an utter oblivion of Shaw's high moral and dramatic purposes, Mr. Carrington writes of Shaw: "One cannot quarrel with what he says usually, the only thing is that it would sound better coming from somebody else. We English dislike a sense of superiority in a man and we have a distrust of the sincerity of the man who pushes himself to the forefront and wonder if he is trying to hoodwink the public." Shaw "was his own publicity agent," and Mr. Carrington thinks it "at least within the bounds of possibility" that much of Shaw's trouble with the censorship "has been engineered for its publicity value." With an intellectual obscurity worthy of John Bowyer Spenser Neville de Stogumber in *Saint Joan* itself, Mr. Carrington states that, with Shaw's "cynical view of mankind, little wonder that he has made his mark attacking and not enjoying humanity. Wit, satire and irony abound in his plays, but genial human tolerance, no. When Shaw laughs he laughs at people, not with them, and his humour leaves a sting. His sneer for his fellow creatures is repellent."

Oh, grove of Academus, thou art avenged! And I am left feeling just a little ashamed to be English. . . .

I conclude with a quotation of some words of Shaw himself, from Stephen Winsten's *Shaw's Corner*: "What kind of people become critics nowadays? Clever little Oxford boys who read essays before their tutors and were told that this was wrong and that was right. And those tutors once submitted their essays to their tutors. An original writer turns coal into diamonds and then the critics take the diamonds and reduce them to coal again."



A Presentational "Saint Joan"

by William Honan¹

In *Saint Joan* Shaw does not say, "Let's pretend"; rather, "Attention please!" This characterizes the presentational style. A production in this style does not depend upon the empathetic response for credence, but upon the vitality and irresistibility of Shaw's wit and wisdom when directly addressed to the audience. *Saint Joan* was produced in this style by the Group 20 Players under the direction of Basil Langton on their 1954 Puerto Rican tour and again last summer at Theatre on the Green in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Basil Langton, who has directed over twenty-five Shaw plays in association with the playwright, including the first British revival of *Saint Joan*, which toured England, France, Germany and Belgium, was thoroughly acquainted with the interpretation Shaw himself wanted. The acting company, a group of young professionals, was also well suited for the production. About a third of the actors had studied in England, where their exposure to style acting had been profound, and the rest were trained and educated at leading drama schools and universities in the United States, which at least attempt training in style acting. In addition, the company as a whole had been introduced to the presentational style in several of their previous productions.

"Don't try to act; just say the words," suggested Langton at an early rehearsal. Constantly, he emphasized the relationship between actor and audience, infrequently facing or "relating" actors to each other. When an actor would play to Joan, his attention or apparent sphere of consciousness merely included Joan, never having left the audience. The actors found themselves becoming orators and the emotions which they were accustomed to discover and express in their parts becoming the recessive traits now dominated by points of view and ideas.

Stage movement was often restricted to getting on and off stage. During the long tent scene there was practically no movement as the actors sat facing the audience delivering speeches about the Church, the Inquisition and feudalism which, as Shaw tells us in the preface, are "all more terrible in their dramatic force than any of the little mortal figures." In effect, the interplay of three ideas, rather than three

¹Mr. Honan, a graduate student at the University of Virginia, currently working on a Master's thesis entitled "Persuasion in Shaw's Plays," is a member of the Group 20 Players' company. His analysis of "production" of *Saint Joan* is especially timely in view of the comments on the play by Dr. Alice Griffin and Mr. Eric Batson elsewhere in this issue.

characters, held the scene. Langton's fixed battery of orators, however, was balanced with moments of swift movement and pageantry. In scene V, when Joan is deserted by the court, the blocking was symbolic as the ensemble literally deserted Joan on stage. The transition between scenes III and IV, representing the Siege of Orleans and the shift from France to England, was accomplished with dashing soldiers and brightly colored banners.

The setting for *Saint Joan* was a simple device for gaining and focusing attention. It consisted of a series of levels and a number of white wooden cubicles which became, successively, chairs in the tent scene, sentry's mounts outside Orleans, and King Charles' bed in the epilogue. No curtain was used, not even a light curtain, and the cubicles were shifted in view of the audience by monks and soldiers. The actors did not appear in or against a background of scenery, but in spacial relationships which helped focus, shift and re-focus attention. No attempt was made to make things look "real," except in the costumes. Above all else, the production was lively and exciting. Perhaps the best illustration of this is a recounting of certain moments of the epilogue as experienced by the audience. It should be observed once again that the staging was theatrically conceived and not intended to create the illusion of reality on stage.

A group of French soldiers swiftly and expertly arrange the white cubicles into a bed, spread sheets and a blanket and stand at rigid attention. A pause. Charles shuffles in, wrapped cozily in the imperial nightgown. Ho-humming to himself absent-mindedly, he dismisses the soldiers with a wave, climbs into bed, opens his Boccaccio and reads with muted giggles. The audience is enjoying this immensely. A clock strikes. Instantly, Charles snatches a rattle from under the covers and whirls it above his head, shattering the stillness of his pantomime. The audience breaks into startled laughter. Ladvenu enters and says his bit with great intensity. Charles shrugs as Ladvenu leaves, asking skeptically: "How did he get in?" The audience laughs again as they recognize: how did anyone get in or out, and, by the way, where are we? Then, darkness, thunder, lightning, and suddenly Joan appears. Cauchon and Dunois enter as the stage becomes filled with color and light.

Another surprise—singing as he strides down the aisle, the cockney soldier makes his way to the stage. He does an about-face and fixes his gaze above the audience, where he appears to see Joan. Actually, Joan stands on the highest level, upstage and brilliantly illuminated. All others are downstage in relatively dim light, facing the audience and talking to Joan as if she were before rather than behind them. As Joan's statue is seen in the cathedrals (not seen by the audience), the ensemble raise their right arms, pointing just over the audience. The lighting on Joan becomes more brilliant than before. The ensemble appear to be reaching forward. One feels that the image of Joan is being cast or projected into the audience as she steps forward and proclaims: "Though men destroyed my body, yet in my soul I have seen God." The ensemble kneel and then leave the stage one by one. There is no spectacle, no superfluous stage effects, no music, nothing but the gradual dim-out of a single spotlight on Joan, for as Langton said: "Shaw ends the play better than music."

Of the three major Boston critics reviewing the production, two were virtually unreserved in their enthusiastic praise. Elliot Norton of the *Boston Post* (August 1, 1954) wrote: "This is the best production I have ever seen the Group 20 Players do, something pretty thrilling at its best and acceptable enough even in its lesser aspects." Elinor Hughes of the *Boston Herald* (July 25, 1954) assured her readers, "Our summer season is not likely to come up with anything more to be admired."

The effect of the presentational interpretation was to strip from the play anything which might obscure the words and the ideas. Thus *Saint Joan* became a concerto for human voices and a concert of ideas.



A Continuing Check-List of Shaviana

I. Works by Shaw

THE CLEVELAND STREET SCANDALS, in *Encounter* (September, 1954). An unpublished letter to the editor of *Truth* (1899) defending homosexuality. Erroneously credited as antedating "by nine years what was previously accepted as Shaw's first printed letter. . . ."

PLAYS AND PLAYERS. London, 1953; New York, 1954. A World Classics reprint of selected drama criticism from the *Saturday Review* (1895-8), with an introduction by A. C. Ward.

II. Shaviana - Books

Hobson, Harold: "George Bernard Shaw," in *ENGLISH WITS*, edited by Leonard Russell. London, 1953. A reissue of a work first published in 1940.

Mander, R., and J. Mitchenson (compilers): *THEATRICAL COMPANION TO SHAW*. London, 1954. A pictorial record of the first performances of Shaw's plays.

O'Casey, Sean: "Bernard Shaw: An Appreciation of a Fighting Idealist," in *HIGHLIGHTS OF MODERN LITERATURE*, edited by Francis Brown. New York (Mentor Books), 1954. Reprinted from the *New York Times Book Review*, November 12, 1950.

III. Shaviana - Periodicals

Bentley, Eric: "Theatre," *Saturday Review of Literature*, June 26, 1954. Reprinted, under the title "Shaw and the Actors," in *The Shavian*, n.s. No. 3 (Autumn, 1954), bulletin of the Shaw Society (London).

Chappelow, Allan: "Photographing the Fabians," *John O' London's Weekly*, May 7, 1954. Describes visit to Shaw's Corner, quotes a Shaw letter, and reproduces "The Chucker Out," last photo taken of Shaw.

Gelatt, Roland: "Dead Man's Will; publication of Shaw's Last Will and Testament," *Saturday Review of Literature*, March 27, 1954.

Gorelik, Mordecai: "Metaphorically Speaking," *Theatre Arts*, November, 1954. Discusses the designing problems for a new production of *Saint Joan*.

Grendon, Felix: "Shaw's 'Annajanska,'" *The Shavian*, n.s. No. 3 (Autumn, 1954), bulletin of the Shaw Society (London).

Hennecke, H.: "Bernard Shaws vermachtnis," *Deutsche Rundschau*, November, 1953.

Mark Twain Journal: Bernard Shaw Memorial Number (Summer, 1954). Contains articles and tributes by Archibald Henderson, Padraic Colum, Christopher Fry, Dean Inge, Lady Astor, Robinson Jeffers, Cyril Scott, Francis Brett Young, Adolphe de Castro, Mazo de la Roche, Hesketh Pearson, and others.

West, E.J.: "Shaw's Criticism of Ibsen: A Reconsideration," *University of Colorado Studies, Series in Language and Literature*, IV (1953).

Shaw at Hedgerow

by Grant Code¹

In an interview with Bernard Shaw by Julia Dorn, published in the New York *Herald-Tribune* on December 27, 1936, Shaw is quoted as saying: "I am interested in the repertory theatre. That's where the whole thing is kept alive, in such theatres as the Malvern Theatre, or in the Hedgerow Theatre in the United States."

Most of the direct communications from Shaw in the Hedgerow files are on business matters and are signed by his secretary, Blanche Patch. One of these, dated October 19, 1931, marks Shaw's recognition of Hedgerow as a professional theatre. It reads: "In reply to your letter . . . Mr. Bernard Shaw asks me to say that if his American agents persist in classing the Hedgerow as an amateur theatre it had better deal direct with him. I therefore enclose particulars of his terms." The only note in Shaw's handwriting reads as follows: "6th Sept. 1946. In reply to yours dated the 27th August:—Make your payments to me by cheques on your bankers as if I lived in Moylan, which is quite simple, or in dollar notes. Pay by the year if you like, or whenever it is most convenient to you. The fraction that will be left to me when your Inland Revenue authorities and the British Exchequer have taken their rake-off will be negligible and need not burden your conscience while it is in arrear." This, obviously, was Shaw's tactful way of co-operating with an organization that was struggling to be solvent, and tends strongly to contradict the misconception that Shaw was a pecuniarily-conscious man devoid of all other concern.

Hedgerow, the most persistently active Shaw Theatre in the United States, was founded in April, 1923, and has been in operation almost continuously ever since. It has produced over 200 plays, 185 of which are counted as "in the repertory." At any particular time, some eight or ten of these plays are active and are alternated in performance. Hedgerow has offered the first American productions of many foreign plays and the first productions anywhere of many American plays. The dramatists of over a dozen countries are represented in the repertory.

The theatre was founded by Jasper Deeter, who continues to be the chief teacher, as well as director of and actor in many of the plays. Other directors at present are Ronald Bishop, David Metcalf, and Rose Schulman. For business purposes the company is organized as a part-

¹This historical record of Shaw production at Hedgerow was written by Mr. Code, an active member of the company, at the request of the editor, to fill a serious gap in our knowledge of Shavian activity in the American tributary theatre. It should be read in conjunction with Basil Langton's "A Shaw Repertory Theatre," in the *Shaw Bulletin*, No. 3 (May, 1952).

nership, consisting of several members of the company. All profits, however, are turned back into the working funds of the company. It is managed democratically by a system of committees and is run as a co-operative, resident members receiving board, lodging, clothes, medical services and incidentals in return for their work, but no salaries. Members of the company do all their own work, designing and constructing scenery, costumes, properties, and other equipment, and doing all the incidental work necessary for running a theatre and maintaining a residence.

In addition to the resident members there are non-resident members, guest actors, and apprentices; the latter do some work in exchange for instruction and may be cast for roles in plays. On the average, between fifty and sixty persons take part in Hedgerow activities during a year, though the number has run as high as eighty-six.

The home theatre occupies an old mill building, originally constructed, about 1840, as a grist mill, and subsequently transformed, first into a guild hall for the Rose Valley Association, and later into a well equipped small theatre. The company has toured extensively through the New England States, Middle West, South and Southwest, and has played seasons of repertory at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York and in the Foyer of the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, where it is currently playing through the end of March of this year. In the current Philadelphia repertory is *Man and Superman*, probably to be augmented by a second Shaw play.

Hedgerow has to date produced eighteen of Shaw's plays. *Candida*, in fact, was the first play produced by Hedgerow, on April 21, 1923, the date being celebrated annually as the birthday of the theatre. At the time of production there was no fanfare about the founding of a new theatre, just the simple announcement that the play would be presented at the Guild Hall in Rose Valley on certain dates. But this production did mark the founding of a new theatre, the only successful repertory theatre in the United States, an achievement in which Bernard Shaw played a major contributing role. The following chart outlines briefly the Shavian compositions which have helped solidify the position of Hedgerow, as reflected by the number of years they have been active in the repertory:

	Production number	Date of first performance	Number of years in repertory
Candida	1st	April 21, 1923	16
Androcles and the Lion	3rd	July 14, 1923	14
Misalliance	16th	June 20, 1924	10
Capt. Brassbound's Conversion	30th	August 13, 1925	4
You Never Can Tell	47th	August 27, 1927	6
Arms and the Man	48th	October 7, 1927	18
The Devil's Disciple	57th	May 3, 1929	12
Heartbreak House	82nd	November 21, 1931	13
Saint Joan	108th	July 26, 1934	11

Commencing with this production it became the custom of Hedgerow to celebrate Shaw's birthday (July 26th) either by the opening of a new play or by the revival of one previously produced.

The Doctor's Dilemma	114th	July 26, 1935	2
Getting Married	119th	July 27, 1936	2

Dark Lady of the Sonnets

March 26, 1937

It is difficult to determine how many years this play was in the active repertory, since it was used as a curtain raiser with other plays; the records do not always list one act plays used as curtain raisers.

Too True to Be Good 125th July 26, 1937

Simpleton of Unexpected Isles 129th July 26, 1938

Man and Superman 136th July 26, 1939

Produced in its entirety, including the "Don Juan in Hell" scene. Removed from the repertory after two years due to wartime depletion of the company. Revived in 1952, it has been in the active repertory ever since.

Major Barbara 140th July 26, 1940

In the Beginning 148th July 26, 1941

Gospel of Brothers Barnabas 148th July 26, 1941

(Parts I and II of Back to Methuselah)

In 1934 Hedgerow inaugurated an annual festival of Shaw plays in July and/or August. For the first Shaw Festival the plays included *Misalliance*, *Arms and the Man*, *Androcles*, *Saint Joan*, *Heartbreak House*, and *Candida*. Seven additional festivals were offered, through 1941. Wartime conditions necessitated the discontinuance of the festival at this time, and it was not until 1953 that the festival was re-activated, running from July 16th through August 1st, the program including a new production of *Too True to Be Good*, together with *Man and Superman*, *Arms and the Man*, and *Heartbreak House*.

As far back as 1896 Bernard Shaw was insisting upon the need for a repertory theatre, "without which we can never become a nation of playgoers." Hedgerow has striven from its inception to fulfil that need. Aided by Shaw's blessing—and genius—we think we have succeeded.



Nearer to a Spiritual Positive

by Christopher Fry

I am glad that you have asked me for an impression of Bernard Shaw. There is not one of us in Church or State who does not owe him a greater debt than we have it in our natures even to acknowledge. He knew that clear thought, compassionate judgment and wise laughter are cardinal virtues: that good must be sought out and acclaimed, and evil sought out and villified, wherever they may be. He knew that there is a cold war, not between nations but within nations, not even between individual men but within the individual man. This is nearer than most of us come to a spiritual positive.

— Reprinted, by permission, from the
Bernard Shaw Memorial Number of the
Mark Twain Journal, Summer, 1954.